



ECSPM EVENT 2: PROCEEDINGS REPORT

1. Introduction: Assembly hosting and participation

The second ECSPM assembly took place in Brussels on 6 February 2018, kindly hosted by the Network to Promote Linguistic Diversity (NLPD – <http://www.nlpd.eu>). We had quorum plus an observer: Ulla-Alexandra Mattl responsible for projects in the context of the European Lifelong Learning Platform for Education (LLLP <http://lllplatform.eu/>) that is considering partnership with us. The representatives of our member organisations who were unable attend had stated that they would be available to connect with us via Skype; i.e., Alexandra Büchler, Director of LAF (Literature Across the Frontiers) and Britta Hufeisen, Director of the Division of Multilingualism of the Institute of Linguistics and Literary Studies (Technische Universität Darmstadt). One member organisation that has not had live representation in either of the assemblies is the International Federation of Language Teacher Associations (FIPLV – <https://fiplv.com/>), represented in the ECSPM by Prof. Terry Lamb, who participated in the first ECSPM event from a distance. The Federal Union of European Nationalities (FUEN – <https://www.fuen.org/>), however, which has recently led a digital campaign for the Minority SafePack Initiative and was able to get the support of over one million Europeans, has been totally absent from both ECSPM events with no excuse or explanation. At a later date, the organization reaffirmed their membership interest and explained that certain administrative changes had not allowed them to take part in the events of our organisation.

2. Issues on the agenda

The agenda, which had been circulated prior to the assembly, regarded the following issues:

- 1) Decision as to whether or not the ECSPM would attempt to coordinate an ERASMUS+ Key Action 3 proposal, on the basis of a recent call with outlined priorities about which ECSPM members had been informed prior to the assembly. The priorities of the call were discussed and some of the members expressed interest in collaborating, but the decision was deferred after further discussion via email communication.
- 2) Assembly participants were shown parts of the updated ECSPM website, and they were strongly advised to inspect/read the contents and later decide how many and which members would be responsible for feeding in what sort of information, rules about news, announcements, projects, etc. to post. Johan van Hoorde noted that the CLARIN project (<https://www.clarin.eu/>) was not included in the list of European projects that are designed to help achieve a multilingual Europe and he promised to write a short description to send to our webmistress, so she can include it in our website.
- 3) Decision about topics on which to hold the discussion forum on issues regarding the following four thematic categories: a) Language learning, teaching, testing, b) Language rights and minorities, on which there are conflicting views, c) Bilingualism-multilingualism: Divergent and similar concerns



between bi- and multilingualism research, and d) Language, Discourses and Culture. Indicative ideas for each category were presented, as these are recorded in **PPT presentation 1** which was projected at the meeting and which is attached along with these Minutes to be sent to all old and new members.

- 4) The idea of the academic bi- and multilingualism research unit cluster was discussed (see the also attached PPT), its role in the ECSPM and how best it can grow and develop, while it was decided that Prof. Theo Marinis will undertake the role of ambassador, recruiting other such centres. Johan van Hoorde, representative of EFNIL was thanked for his role in recruiting a new member in this Multilingualism Research Cluster (MRC). This new member, which was welcomed by the older members is the Babylon Centre for the Study of Superdiversity, of the University of Tilburg, and it is represented by Prof. Massimiliano Spotti.
- 5) In this context two of our new ECSPM members and specifically members of the academic cluster of our organisation presented the institutions they represent: a) Prof. Tanja Rinker introduced her academic unit at the University of Konstanz in Germany and presented the ATHEME project (<http://www.atheme.eu>) to the participants, and b) Prof. Theo Marinis introduced his academic unit at the University of Reading in England and presented the Multilingual mind project <https://www.multilingualmind.eu/>
- 6) New membership/partnership in the ECSPM was discussed and there were deliberations about **three** more organisations being considered for partnership or membership (a status which entails obligations but also benefits (see: <http://ecspm.org/membership/>). The three organisations are:
 - a) EALTA (the European Association for Language Testing and Assessment), which will bring the issue of their partnership in their next General Assembly (25-27 May 2018)
 - b) Greeklanglab (Research Lab for the Greek Language and Multilingualism), University of Thessaly, Greece
 - c) European Language Council
 - d) OLBI (Official Languages and Bilingualism Institute), University of Ottawa, Canada

Outside the topics on the agenda, the president presented to the assembly participants with information about the Salzburg global seminar, Session 586, on “Language Learning and Integration in a Globalized World” which she had attended in December 2017. She announced that the Salzburg Statement regarding the importance of languages and language rights which has been published in English¹ and translated in about forty (40) other majority and minority world languages.²

Before closing the meeting, a few announcements were made by the General Secretary Ms Gisladottir

¹ https://www.salzburgglobal.org/fileadmin/user_upload/Documents/2010-2019/2017/Session_586/EN_SalzburgGlobal_Statement_586_-_Multilingual_World_English.pdf

² https://issuu.com/salzburgglobal/docs/salzburgglobal_statement_586



informing members about the following:

- a) The 2018 invoices for the annual fee of 200 euro will be sent to everyone in April-May 2018 to new and old members
- b) Everyone who has not yet filled in a Membership form is required to do so and the form will be sent to all those who need to submit the form by the Secretary
- c) Members are invited to share their newsletters with us and to Inform us about their own activities, or those of other organisations they are affiliated with, that might be of interest to the ECSPM members and partners so that they may be posted on the website and on Fbook. Both their own activities and of other organisations.
- d) Each member organisation receives information through its representative and it is up to the representative to notify his/her organisation's members about issues of interest to them
- e) Finally, members were kindly requested to use the multilingualism google group address only for matters related to the ECSPM and to let us know if there are links on website that do not work or if there are typos etc.

3. European Commission Consultation Meeting

Before the discussion about the aforementioned issues, all ECSPM members had been informed about the Consultation Meeting organised by the European Commission on "Language Teaching and Learning". It was held on 5 February in Brussels and Bessie Dendrinis attended, having been invited in her capacity as ECSPM President and as an experienced university professor in the area of foreign language education. Also invited to this meeting were about 60 representatives from EU Ministries of Education, experts from other European organisations in the area of Applied Linguistics, language education and from the Council of Europe, as well as representatives of related European NGOs.

The aim of the consultation meeting was for the European Commission to gain insights and use the input from the participating experts in the working proposal being prepared –a proposal which outlines the strategy the EU will follow in order to "ensure that every young European is able to communicate, at variable degrees, according to their interests and needs, in at least two other languages in addition to the language of schooling by the time they finish upper secondary school."

The Multilingualism policy officer Ms Kristina Cunningham opened the proceedings of the day with a presentation. Attached please find the document (**PPT presentation 2**), which she used to address the audience, stressing the fact that at the Gothenburg Summit, in late 2017, EU Heads of State and Government called for Member States, the Council and the Commission to take work forward with a view to "enhancing the learning of languages, so that more young people will speak at least two European languages in addition to their mother tongue."

In closing her presentation, Ms Cunningham stated that the Commission believes that there are three main



avenues needing to be explored, so as to bring about the necessary change where language education is concerned:

- 1) Efficient and innovative teaching and learning methods
- 2) Support to teachers in general and language teachers in particular, as well as to school leaders to deal with the increasingly multilingual population of European schools
- 3) Development of comprehensive language learning strategies.

More information was provided,³ before the consultation meeting participants were divided into working groups in order to answer questions raised by the panel of officers from the European Commission who were conducting the event.

The working groups made up of people with knowledge and experiences at international, supranational, national and regional level discussed issues related to the following themes:

- Informal learning of languages and how this knowledge can be exploited
- Plurilingual competence, what it entails and how it is developed, and also how the concept differs from that of multilingualism
- The languages offered in schools, the language of schooling, and understanding the school as a multilingual topos
- Viewing language not as an 'object' to be learnt but as a resource for knowledge and as a way of being constantly in a condition of learning the language and through language
- How to exploit language resources that learners bring into the classroom
- The types of literacy which are required –for teachers to have and students to develop – and how to build up teachers' and students' intercultural competence
- Developing further a common (language) teacher education framework
- Backwash effects of monolingual proficiency testing and assessment

Also discussed were the needs to:

- Promote language learning through national policies
- Deal more constructively with minority populations (children with 1 or 2 mother tongues, different from the official school language)
- Cross border teaching of languages
- How best to motivate learners to be interested in language learning
- How best to monitor language learning inside and outside the school

³ Participants were provided with information regarding (a) the assessment of the language situation in Europe available through the Commission's report with key data about language teaching at school in Europe, 2017, and about how much support is provided to immigrant children, (b) schools becoming increasingly multilingual spaces, (c) the fact that 13 EU countries report that 5 of the schools have more than 25% of students that speak another language at home than the school language, (d) a literacy perspective in education and a greater focus on multilingualism and overall language learning.



- Outlining the responsibilities of the school leaders.

The consultation meeting also served as an occasion for liaising with other people about possibly creating a consortium to draft a proposal for the new Erasmus+, Key Action 3 call, that the ECSPM members had been informed about. In order to be fully aware of the requirements, our General Secretary, Guðrún Gísladóttir, reported on an information meeting which had taken place a few days earlier, organised by the Commission, at which she could not be present physically but attended the web-streamed event virtually.

Ms Gísladóttir's report, sent to our members was the following:

During the information meeting, it was emphasized that having on board in the perspective consortium at least three Ministries (or high public officials) from three different European countries is essential for anyone wishing to seek funding for a project. Ministries can delegate their role to another 'agency' (which must have been registered as a legal entity for at least three years) but they must be extant in the project. Regarding eligibility, see p. 17 in the Guidelines (link to Info regarding NUTS). Eligibility will be checked. Not only at pre-proposal level but also at full proposal level. It was also emphasised that the key to any project to be proposed for funding must involve policy makers, researchers, universities. The coordinator MUST have significant experience in coordinating these sorts of projects and the economical means to take on the coordination, especially since 25% of the project funding has to come from the consortium.

When drafting the proposal, be clear about the division of labour and which roles/tasks each institution will undertake. Also, be very clear on: what you want to experiment, why it is important, what specific needs it covers, and what is its added value to the EU. When preparing the project, keep in mind that a solid methodology must be designed with a suitable research partner and the project participants must follow the methodology outlined so as to produce scientifically sound and valid results. All these are important for the clarity and the success of the project proposal and for the project execution.

The EU is willing to put education on top of the agenda and the education debate at the Gothenburg Summit implies that this is the case. The Commission took all the points from the Summit into account and considerable work is being put into the effort of proposing strategies which will allow achievement of goals. The projects to be funded through Erasmus+ should pave the way for the implementation of desired policies.

During the economic crisis, investment in education has decreased and even though the economy is improving investment in education is not a priority in most countries, which is something that should alert the EU and provide opportunities which may be to the benefit of education as in the case of Italy and Portugal which have some interesting educational reforms on the way and as in the case of Sweden, which is making long term investments with EU support, both with policy and funding.

Some progress is being made as to drop out rates, but in countries that have had a major inflow of migrants and refugees, the numbers are different. It has proven very difficult to keep these youngsters in school, but,



even there, there are disparities.

New forms of cooperation are needed, especially so as to meet the educational needs through curricula reform. Flexibility is required.

4. Follow up

1. Following the ECSPM Assembly held in February, we attempted to coordinate interested public authorities and universities in various countries (including, Belgium, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Ireland, Italy, Portugal and Poland) to form a consortium so we could develop and submit a pre-proposal for an ERASMUS+ project, concerned with policy implementation focusing on standards and tools for digital language learning assessment through a multilingual platform. Most of the institutions contacted and were very interested but the the time pressure did not allow a well-thought out and planned research methodology. Therefore, it was decided to postpone the project proposal and start working on the same project idea as a consortium for the next Erasmus+ call.
2. We have been planning the next general assembly and ECSPM Symposium, to be co-organised and hosted by Darmstadt Technical University 26-27 September. Members and partners will be informed separately about the event.

10 May 2018

The ECSPM President

Prof. Bessie Dendrinis